

Core Lesson 2

VOCABULARY

free market economy
free enterprise
artisan
laborer
apprentice

Vocabulary Strategy

apprentice

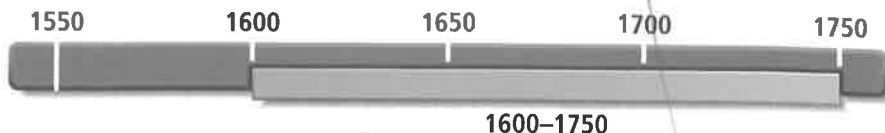
An **apprentice** learns a skill from an expert. Apprentice comes from a word that means "to understand."

READING SKILL

Cause and Effect Take notes on what **caused** many people to come to the Middle Colonies.

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Life in the Middle Colonies



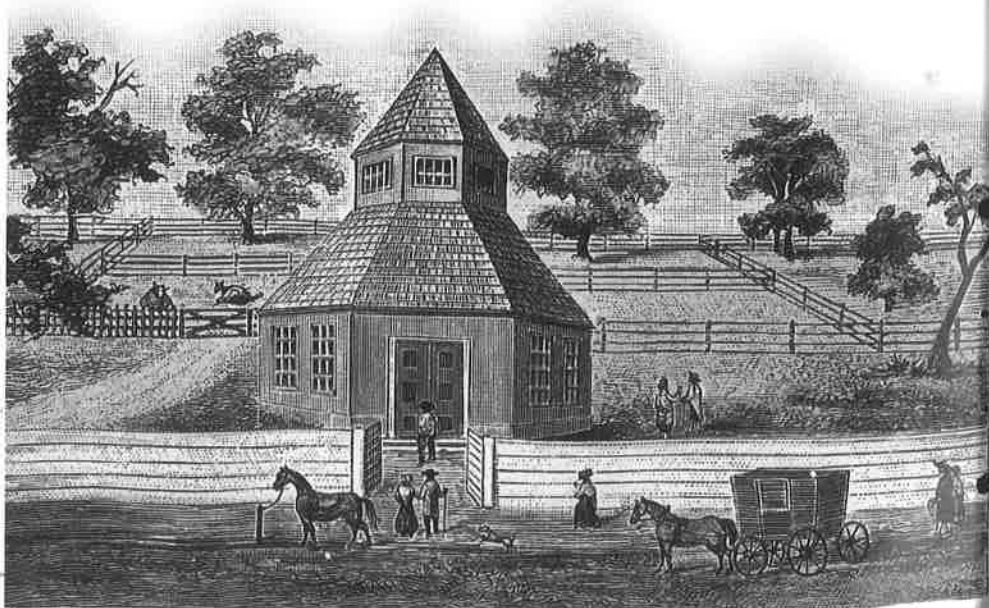
Build on What You Know If you and your family were moving to a new place, wouldn't you want to be accepted? In the 1600s, the Middle Colonies welcomed people of many different religions and countries.

A Mix of People

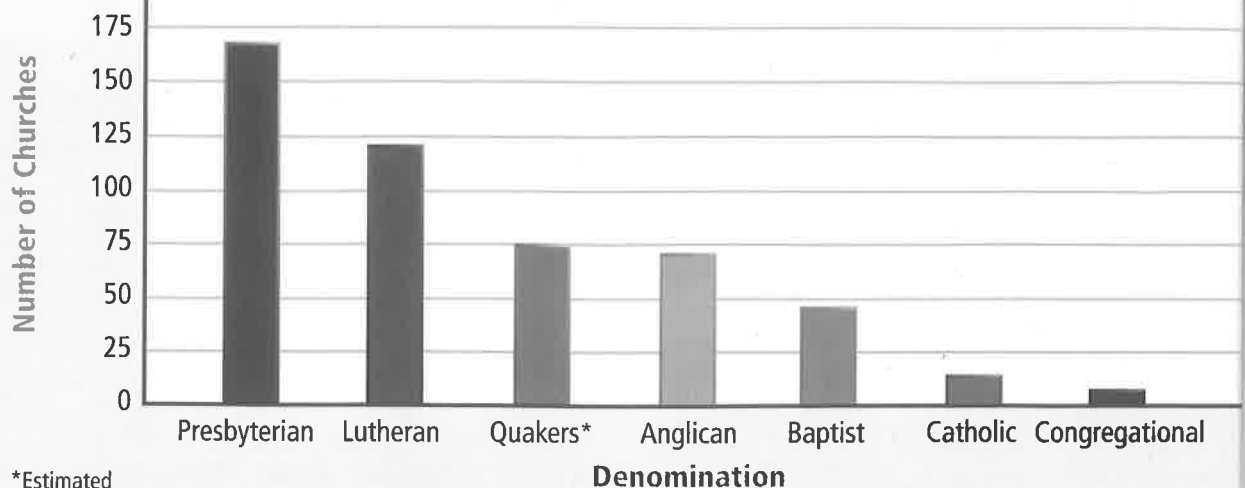
Main Idea People from many cultures and religions lived in the Middle Colonies.

The people of the Middle Colonies came from many lands. Colonists were German, Dutch, Scots-Irish, Scandinavian, and English. Some were enslaved Africans. Many colonists were Quakers or members of other Protestant churches. Others were Jews and Catholics.

Quaker Meetinghouse Quakers worshipped in meetinghouses. This New Jersey meetinghouse was built in 1683.



Religious Diversity in the Middle Colonies, 1750



Many People, Many Beliefs The range of religious beliefs in the Middle Colonies was more diverse than those of New England and the Southern Colonies.

SKILL Reading Charts Which religious groups had about the same number of churches?

The Middle Colonies had a diverse population because their proprietors believed in religious tolerance. Tolerance is respecting beliefs and practices that are different from one's own. **William Penn** supported tolerance. He believed that people of all religions should live together in peace. Other proprietors simply wanted colonists to buy or rent their land for farming. These proprietors did not care about colonists' religious beliefs as long as the colonists could pay for the land.

Religious tolerance and inexpensive land attracted people from many parts of Europe. Some came to escape punishment for their religious beliefs. Others came to farm their own land. All came to find a better way of life.

Newcomers to the Middle Colonies usually arrived at the ports of New York or Philadelphia. A few colonists stayed in the cities to find work, but most moved to the countryside to live and work on farms.

Making a Living

Main Idea Most people in the Middle Colonies farmed to earn a living, but cities were important centers of trade.

The climate and soil of the Middle Colonies were excellent for farming. Both men and women spent long hours working in the fields and in the home. As in New England, children helped out as soon as they were old enough. Boys helped plant and harvest crops. Girls cooked, sewed, and did housework. Children also cared for the family's animals and garden.

Farmers raised livestock such as cattle and pigs. They grew vegetables, fruits, and other crops in the fertile soil. Farmers grew many different grains, such as wheat, corn, and barley. In fact, they grew so much grain used to make bread that the Middle Colonies became known as the "breadbasket" of the thirteen colonies.

REVIEW Why did proprietors allow religious tolerance?

Agriculture in the Middle Colonies was so good that farmers usually grew enough to feed their families and still have a surplus. A surplus is more than what is needed. Farmers sold surplus goods to earn a living. Most farmers used the long, wide rivers of the Middle Colonies to ship grain and livestock to sell in Philadelphia or New York. Some colonists also sold wood or furs from their land. Merchants then sold the goods as exports to Europe, the West Indies, and cities in the other British colonies, such as Boston and Charles Town.

The Middle Colonies, like the other English colonies, had a free market economy. In a **free market economy**, the people, not the government, decide what will be produced. The Middle Colonies had a free market economy partly because the colonies' proprietors did not tell colonists what to do. Colonists were free to make the decisions they believed would earn them the most money. The economic system in which people may start any business that they believe will succeed is called **free enterprise**. Enterprise is another word for business.

City Life

Philadelphia and New York were the two largest and most important cities in the Middle Colonies. Both cities had ports and were centers of shipping and trade. The free market economy of these successful cities attracted merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans. An **artisan** is a person who is skilled at making something by hand, such as silver spoons or wooden chairs.

Laborers also found work in the cities. A **laborer** is a person who does hard physical work. Some of the laborers in the Middle Colonies were enslaved Africans. They worked in laundries, as house servants, or on the docks loading and unloading ships.

Hard at Work This boy at Colonial Williamsburg (right) shows visitors that children performed many chores on farms like the Pennsylvania farm in the painting below.





Colonial Shops Signs like these hung outside artisan workshops. The pictures show what artisans made or repaired, such as furniture and clothing.

Many young people who lived in towns and cities became apprentices. An **apprentice** is someone who studies with a master to learn a skill or business. As a child, an apprentice often lived in the master's house. Apprentices usually worked with their masters for four to seven years. Boy apprentices learned skills such as shoemaking, printing, and bookmaking. Girl apprentices learned how to spin thread and weave cloth. By watching and helping, apprentices gained the skills they needed to enter the business as adults.

Most children in the Middle Colonies learned how to read and write, but many colonists believed that it was most important for children to learn useful work skills. Parents expected their children to learn a business or run the family farm instead of going to college.

REVIEW Why did colonial children become apprentices?


Lesson Summary

The Middle Colonies were a place where people from many different countries could live together and earn a good living. Most colonists were farmers, but New York and Philadelphia were busy centers of shipping and trade. Children learned skills by helping on farms, at home, or as apprentices.

Why It Matters . . .

The diversity of the people in the Middle Colonies would help shape the kind of country the United States would later become.

Lesson Review

- 1 **VOCABULARY** Write a short paragraph about children's lives in the Middle Colonies, using **artisan** and **apprentice**.
- 2  **READING SKILL** What caused people with different religious beliefs to come to the Middle Colonies?
- 3 **MAIN IDEA: History** Why were the Middle Colonies known as the breadbasket?
- 4 **MAIN IDEA: Economics** How did most people in the Middle Colonies earn a living?
- 5 **PLACES TO KNOW** Why were Philadelphia and New York important cities?

- 6 **CRITICAL THINKING: Infer** How can a city's religious tolerance affect the growth and daily life of that city?

- 7 **CRITICAL THINKING: Evaluate** Do you think free enterprise was good for the Middle Colonies? Explain why or why not.



DRAMA ACTIVITY Create a dialogue between a 12-year-old colonist and his or her parents about becoming an apprentice. Use what you have learned in this lesson about an apprentice's work.